

YUANXIAO FESTIVAL || 元宵节

YUANXIAO FESTIVAL, ALSO KNOWN AS THE LANTERN FESTIVAL, IS CELEBRATED ON THE FIFTEENTH DAY OF THE LUNAR CALENDAR AS THE LAST DAY OF THE NEW YEAR CELEBRATION.

LANTERNS & RIDDLES

Traditionally, paper lanterns are hung during the Yuanxiao festival, on which riddles were written. Children would try to solve the riddles on the lanterns.



THE YEAR OF THE DRAGON

This year is the year of the **dragon**, which is the fifth animal in the Chinese zodiac and considered the luckiest sign to be born under as the dragon is said to be a deliverer of good and master of authority.



LEGENDS OF THE YUANXIAO FESTIVAL

Many different legends surround the origin of the Yuanxiao festival. Some say that the festival was started to appease the gods and ask for good fortune in the next year; others say that the festival's original purpose was to deceive the Jade Emperor, the ruler of the heavens, and stave off imminent death and destruction.

One legend revolves around a maid of the palace named Yuanxiao, whom the emperor's advisor, Mr. Eastern, saw crying one day. When she told him that she would rather die than not ever see her family again, he promised her that they would be reunited. Mr. Eastern then spread the rumor that on the thirteenth day of the first month, the God of Fire was going to send a fairy in red riding a black horse to burn down the city. On that day, Yuanxiao pretended to be the red fairy and presented a "decree" from the God of Fire to the emperor that stated that the capital be burned down on the fifteenth.

The emperor asked Mr. Eastern for advice. Mr. Eastern claimed that the God of Fire liked to eat tangyuan and that each household should prepare tangyuan to worship the God of Fire. Also, he suggested that each household hang lanterns and set off fire crackers and fireworks to confuse the Jade Emperor and make it look like the city was already on fire on the fifteenth.

The emperor happily did as Mr. Eastern suggested and on the fifteenth, people did as they were told. Yuanxiao's parents happened to observe the lantern decorations in the palace and were reunited with their daughter. The emperor decreed that the celebrations would continue every year, and because Yuanxiao made the best tangyuan, the people call the day "Yuanxiao Festival."

TANGYUAN

Traditionally, people eat tangyuan, glutinous rice balls of various colors which are often filled with sweet pastes. They are thought to give good life.



STUFFED TANGYUAN RECIPE

What You Need: brown sugar, ginger, glutinous (sticky rice) flour, water, knife, a smooth surface, strainer spoon, two pots with lids

Making Tangyuan:

1. Preparing filling: using the knife, break the brown sugar slices into chunks about the size of a pill.
2. Preparing dough: add 1 part water little by little to 2 parts glutinous flour as you knead the dough. Do not add all the water at once. Add more water if needed until the consistency of the dough is like play dough.
3. Roll the dough into one long piece about half an inch in diameter.
4. Break the long piece into sections about 1.5 inches long.

5. Take one section and roll it into a ball. Using a spoon, bury a brown sugar chunk inside. Make sure that the dough is evenly wrapped around the filling and that no sugar is exposed. It is best not to have the dough too thick around the filling. In the end, it should look like a ball that is a bit less than 1 inch in diameter.
6. Sprinkle some flour on the tangyuan to prevent it from sticking.

Note: If you see that the dough is cracking too much when you roll the tangyuan, add water.

Making the Soup:

7. Skin the ginger and cut it into large chunks.
8. Put the ginger and brown sugar into a pot of water. Heat it until it comes to a rolling boil.

Note: The amount of sugar to put in depends on how sweet you like the soup. Usually, for four people, add a slice of brown sugar as a start, then add half a slice each time as you want the soup to be sweeter.

Cooking Tangyuan

9. Fill a separate pot with water. When the water comes to a rolling boil, put tangyuans in. Stir occasionally.
10. Cook until the tangyuans float to the top, then boil it for 5 more minutes.

Serving Tangyuan

11. Take the tangyuan out of the pot with a strainer spoon; be careful not to break the tangyuan.
12. Add the sugar soup and enjoy!

GENERAL INFORMATION

PLAYGROUP

BU-Dumpling Playgroups are for adopted Chinese children (ages 4-9) and their families. Through activities such as stories, crafts, and cooking, these children are exposed to Chinese culture and their families have a way to connect and network

Boston Chinatown Neighborhood Center:
38 Ash St, Boston, MA 02111

Feb 25, Mar 10, Mar 31, Apr 28; 10:30am – noon

ABOUT US

MIT China Care (MITCC) and **Boston University China Care Fund (BUCCF)** are student-run organizations dedicated to creating life changing opportunities for Chinese orphans and locally adopted Chinese children.

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